

Six Month Sleep Progression



Little Village Sleep

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE 6-MONTH PROGRESSION?

The cause of this progression is more often than not the result of rolling or sitting unassisted and depending on your baby even crawling. The additional core strength that this provides can lead to early crawling. Often babies will start waking in the night to practice their new skills and then need a parent to help them get back to sleep. The fussiness you see might be a result of developmental changes. If they have learned to process or understand new information, then this period can be incredibly overwhelming for them, and of course, they want their parents around to comfort them and keep them safe. While it might be hard in the moment (especially when you can't get a break), try to find some joy in knowing that you have done such an amazing job connecting and bonding with your child that you are the chosen one to provide the love and comfort that your baby so desperately needs. There is another growth spurt around 6 months. This just happens to coincide with the 6-month sleep progression. Your child likely associates feeding with comfort and safety as well as needed nutrition. While it might feel like you are feeding your little one constantly, babies at this age don't know how to overeat. If you are a nursing parent and they are actively nursing (listen for the suck- suck-swallow pattern), then they need these frequent marathon feeds.

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HOW TO SURVIVE THIS PROGRESSION

This progression typically lasts around two weeks. As we discussed above, you have likely been the chosen one for this progression. A phrase that we cannot stress enough is, “you cannot fill from an empty cup.” Self-care is one of the most important things that you can do for both you and your child. You cannot provide the love, support, and connection that your little one needs if you are depleted yourself. Self-care is one of the most generous gifts you can provide to your family. If you have a village or partner, call on your village/partner for help in this time.

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BABY-LED STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING NEW SKILLS

Provide your little one with as much time during the day as needed to practice their new skills. Many families incorporate stroller or carrier walks into their daily routines as a way to get out of the house and get a change of scenery. But when your baby's new skills are emerging, skip the walk or visit or errand so that your baby can have time to practice their new skills during the day (and not at three in the morning - although I will say that this is a bit hard to avoid). If your child is learning to sit unassisted or to get into a sitting position, something that can often happen is that your baby can sit up but has no idea how to get back down again. Try placing a toy behind your little one to see if they can rotate their trunk and learn to grasp the object. Be there to support them and slow the motion down. Eventually you will need less and less support as they learn to control their body. Helping your little one explore different ways to get from a sitting to a laying down position will help with this transition. Know that if you have propped your little one into a sitting position before they are ready, then they are definitely not going to be able to get down on their own. Most babies master sitting up, if unassisted, slower to 9 months.

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BABY-LED STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING NEW SKILLS

If you have an early stander, this can be a huge challenge. Many children figure out how to pull up to a standing position early, but they do not have the ability or cognitive understanding to figure out how to get back down. If this is the case in your home, the best thing you can do for your baby is to help them learn how to get up and back down confidently and safely. Place preferred toys on the couch so that your child can see them but will need to pull themselves to standing in order to reach them. This is the encouragement and motivation needed to practice. Once they are up, you need to help them figure out how to get back down. Use the same strategy: place a preferred toy down by your baby's ankle (they will likely face plant the first time trying to pick the toy up—be prepared to move quickly). You can also tickle the backs of their knees to encourage them to bend them. Putting on a fun, jaunty song that they can bounce along with is also a great strategy. Getting your baby to bend their knees and bounce along to the music (model this action for your baby) will get them into the habit of bending their legs, and bouncing is only four inches away from crouching.

Note: This also works using a coffee table, although be aware that most children will fall or sit down suddenly in the early days of learning this new skill and will likely bonk their heads on the edge of the table on the way down.

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PARENT-LED STRATEGY FOR LEARNING NEW SKILLS IN CRIB

Until your child has mastered the art of getting back down into their crib (either from a sitting or standing position), you might need to just gently lay your baby down and rub their tummy or back to encourage them to stay lying down on the mattress. You will likely have to stay in the room with them until they fall asleep. If your baby is on a floorbed you can easily lay next to them and support them to sleep. Remember there are no bad habits, supporting your baby to sleep is normal and sometimes necessary during times of growth and development.

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